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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000376

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA AMBASSADOR QUINN AND NSC FOR AHARRIMAN AND
KAMEND

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: HELMAND GOVERNOR PROMISED COOPERATION ON
ERADICATION

REF: KABUL 00362

1. (C) Summary: Reftel discussed, among other things, the dramatic increase in opium cultivation in Helmand and advised the establishment of the Helmand Eradication Planning Task Force to deal with the critical issue of opium cultivation in Helmand. That Task Force met January 26 and is undertaking urgent and credible action to address this challenge to GOA/US CN goals in Afghanistan. End Summary.

2. (C) On January 26 the first meeting of the Task Force was held. The meeting was chaired by Deputy Minister of Interior General Daud, Deputy Minister of Counter Narcotics at the Ministry of Interior, and attended by Helmand Governor Engineer Daoud, Deputy Governor Amir Mohammed Akhunzada, Deputy Chief of Strategic Operations for the Ministry of Defense (MOD) Brigadier General Rahim, Colonel Gul Marjan of the Afghan National Army (ANA) Advisor to the MOD Chief of Staff, Afghan PRT liaison officer, the head of the Provincial Council for Helmand, the Chief of Police for Helmand Abdul Rahman Jan, the Chief of the Helmand National Security Directorate (NDS) Nazar Ali Khan, Lt. Colonel Don Modder and Major Billy Bob Brown of CFC-A, INL Kabul Deputy Director Alan Smiley, INL Eradication Specialist Mick Hogan, INL Aviation Advisor Guy Charlton, PRT Deputy Director Andrew Mann, British Embassy Drugs Team (BEDT) Deputy Head Graham Zebedee, BEDT Eradication Specialist James Hardy, DynCorp logistical support personnel, DynCorp PEP Deputy Program Manager Mike O'Donovan, CNTF Director Doug Wankel and others.

3. (C) General Daud began the meeting by discussing the operational planning meetings for governor-led eradication (GLE) that had been conducted in Kabul over the past two days and stated that those planning sessions had gone well and the GOA was optimistic that the plans could be successfully implemented. Daud then mentioned that on January 25, Deputy Governor Amir Mohammed briefed the GOA, US and UK planning team on the severity of the opium cultivation problem in Helmand Province this year, saying that it was very large cultivation, perhaps twice as large as last year's opium cultivation. General Daud said based upon the magnitude of the opium cultivation as stated by the Deputy Governor, it was decided to cancel yesterday's planning session in order to invite the Governor and other senior provincial officials to an expanded planning session on January 26.

4. (C) General Daud made a short statement to the group and began by stating that eradication success in Helmand was critical if the GOA and its international partners were to succeed in reducing the level of opium cultivation in Afghanistan. General Daud said that there would need to be a plan for eradication of 1-3 months in Helmand and due to security concerns there would need to a deployment of 500 Afghan National Police (ANP) from Kabul, 500 Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers and the Helmand Provincial authorities would need to deploy an additional 500 police officers. The force of 1500 ANP/ANA would be responsible for providing security to the Province during opium eradication operations. General Daud said that he would recommend that eradication begin with government lands that are growing poppy and those lands of government officials that have poppy cultivated in Helmand.

5. (C) Engineer Daoud, Governor of Helmand, then spoke to the Task Force. Governor Daoud said that he completely agreed with General Daud in that if we can succeed with opium eradication in Helmand, we will succeed with opium eradication in Afghanistan. The Governor said that the government officials, supported by the international community, have the responsibility to build peace and maintain stability in Afghanistan and to do so, it is important that the Afghan government, the Afghan people and the international community come together to fight terrorism and the drug mafia. The Governor said that GOA officials have the training and the infrastructure necessary to fight terrorism and the GOA needs the same capacity to fight drugs.

6. (C) Governor Daoud said that it was important to remember two things--fighting terrorism means fighting Taliban and other terrorists and that fighting drugs, opium, means fighting the community as well because they are involved in the business of opium cultivation. The Governor said that it is critical that the GOA establish links with the community

in rural Afghanistan. He said that these links are largely non-existent at this time. He further outlined that 50 percent of the schools have been burned by the Taliban, clinics are needed and food is needed in some areas. The Governor said that the GOA must go to the communities to eradicate but they must also establish governance and relationships with the community as well. The Governor said, "we can't complete one job and forget the other."

17. (C) The Governor said that he has had several meetings with tribal elders, leaders and scholars and has discussed the need for eradication. Based upon those discussions he said that as he begins eradication, he must prioritize his efforts by first destroying opium fields on GOA land (the Governor said that more than 10,000 hectares of opium is cultivated on GOA owned land) and by destroying those fields cultivated by government officials. (Note: Per the Governor, there are many provincial, district and local government officials who cultivate poppy). The Governor said that once he eradicates the aforementioned poppy fields, the community will accept eradication of their fields. In fact, some of the community leaders stated that if the GOA eradicates the GOA land and land of government officials, the community will voluntarily eradicate their own fields. The Governor said the community will not trust the GOA to eradicate impartially and fairly unless the Governor first goes after the fields on GOA-land and those cultivated by government officials.

18. (C) The Governor said that according to the Provincial Agricultural Department, there is an estimated 77,375 hectares of opium under cultivation in Helmand Province at this time (last year the USG estimated that there was 38,500 hectares of opium cultivation or 36 percent of Afghanistan's cultivation for 2005).

19. (C) The Governor said he welcomed the support of the additional ANP and ANA forces that General Daud had previously mentioned as long as it was understood that the leadership of the eradication effort and the security effort for the same must be provincially-led or else the Governor would not be responsible for the eradication effort. The Governor went on to say that he would welcome any and all monitoring and verification specialists that Kabul can provide as he wants the eradication efforts to be transparent. The Governor also advised that if he was to conduct eradication efforts in the Northern areas of Helmand Province, he would request that the international community consider the possibility of conducting some immediate needs support in the form of "cash for work" programs there, given the extreme poverty of the region. Wankel advised that USAID provided "cash for work" programs in Helmand Province last year, but not in Northern Helmand due to security concerns and advised that unless security significantly improves, USAID (and its implementing partner Chemonics) would not be able to consider such a request.

110. (C) Wankel asked General Daud whether there was a decision by the GOA to deploy ANA forces or if that was a contingency to be considered and whether the MOD and the ANA agreed to support the eradication effort in Helmand. General Daud said that he had discussions with the MOD and they committed to deploy up to 500 ANA soldiers for security, if required. Brigadier General Rahim confirmed General Daud's comments and said that while it was not MOD policy to fight drugs, MOD would provide support for security for the Governor's eradication effort. The Brigadier General said that the deployment may require coalition support in the form of mentors and trainers.

111. (C) The Governor provided written details of his eradication plan to INL Eradication Specialist Mick Hogan and BEDT Eradication Specialist James Hardy and they will respond to the Task Force and the Governor as to how they can support the plan. General Daud concluded the meeting and advised that further meetings of the appropriate individuals would take place, as needed.

112. (C) Comment: The Governor was firmly in charge of his presentation and made clear the fact that he would be in charge. Daud and the MOD stated there was GOA agreement for ANA support for security. The CFC-A representatives took copious notes and said they would meet with the ANA and MOD to determine what had been discussed and agreed to meet at senior levels and determine what CFC-A's position would be for the announced ANA support. End Comment.

NORLAND